

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Steve Schaefer on January 14, 2010.

The application has been amended as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of integrating a new source of supply into an electronic purchasing process, the method comprising:
 - initiating an electronic purchasing process on a purchasing computing system having an internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory of suppliers and information related to the suppliers, wherein the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory is hosted by a service provider of the purchasing computing system;
 - providing, as part of the initiated electronic purchasing process, a sourcing graphical user interface on a display device of the purchasing computing system, the sourcing graphical user interface having a first user entry area to enter, as a source of supply in the electronic purchasing process, a supplier included in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the sourcing graphical user interface further having a second area to initiate a search for additional suppliers not included in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the second area including a user-selectable listing of at least one external ~~contact~~ business partner directory of suppliers wherein each of the listed at least one external ~~contact~~ business partner directory is user selectable, each of the at least one external ~~contact~~ business partner directory being hosted by an external service provider that is not the service provider of the purchasing computing system and the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory;

receiving a user selection of one of the listed at least one external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, and upon receiving the user selection, establishing electronic communication, by the purchasing computing system, with the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, and receiving information from the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory to provide, on the display device of the purchasing computing system, a display of a directory of the suppliers in the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory;

~~upon~~ receiving, at the purchasing computing system, a user selection of one of the suppliers included in the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, sending an electronic request from the purchasing computing system and to the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the electronic request identifying the selected supplier, and in response receiving an electronic response that includes predefined required information to create in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory a ~~contact~~ business partner entry for the selected supplier;

creating, using the information from the electronic response, a new ~~contact~~ business partner entry in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry for the selected supplier;

determining whether a user who initiated and is controlling the electronic purchasing process has authority to approve the new business partner entry;

responsive to a determination that approval is not required, identifying the new business partner as authorized in the internal business partner directory, and allowing the user to continue with the electronic purchasing process with the selected supplier as a source of supply; and

responsive to a determination that the user does not have said authority, determining an authorized approver for the business partner entry, initiating an approval workflow item for the authorized approver, and putting the electronic purchasing process on hold.

assigning the selected supplier as a source of supply in the electronic purchasing process.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said creating of the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry comprises mapping parsed information from the electronic response into fields according to a partner interface protocol.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information received from the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory comprises an HTML page.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the information received from the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory comprises an XML page.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic purchasing process requires a supplier ~~contact~~ business partner.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, further comprising:
completing the electronic purchasing process with the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, further comprising
generating a purchase order using the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry.

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [9] 1, further comprising:
flagging the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry as incomplete in response to
determining the user does not have said authority.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, further comprising:

generating a purchasing document with said new ~~contact~~ business partner entry;
and
flagging the purchasing document as on hold.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [12] 1, further comprising:
deleting the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry from the internal directory in
response to the authorized approver not approving the new ~~contact~~ business partner
entry.

29. (Currently Amended) A computing system comprising:
an internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory including information relating to a
plurality of suppliers;
a network device; and
an electronic procurement computing system hosted by a service provider that
also hosts the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the electronic procurement
system operative to:

initiate an electronic purchasing process on the electronic procurement
system;

provide, as part of the initiated electronic purchasing process, a sourcing
graphical user interface on a display device of the electronic purchasing
computing system, the sourcing graphical user interface having a first user entry
area to enter, as a source of supply in the electronic purchasing process, a
supplier included in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the sourcing
graphical user interface further having a second area to initiate a search for
additional suppliers not included in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner
directory, the second area including a user-selectable listing of at least one

external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, wherein each of the listed at least one external ~~contact~~ business partner directory is user selectable;

receive a user selection of one of the listed at least one external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, and upon receiving the user selection, establish electronic communication with the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, and receive information from the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory to provide, on the display device of the purchasing computing system, a display of a directory of the suppliers in the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory;

upon receiving a user selection of one of the suppliers included in the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, send an electronic request to the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the electronic request identifying the selected supplier, and in response receive an electronic response that includes predefined information to create in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory a ~~contact~~ business partner entry for the selected supplier;

create, using the information from the electronic response, a new ~~contact~~ business partner entry in the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory, the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry for the selected supplier; and

determine whether a user who initiated and is controlling the electronic purchasing process has authority to approve the new business partner entry; responsive to a determination that approval is not required, identify the new business partner as authorized in the internal business partner directory, and allow the user to continue with the electronic purchasing process with the selected supplier as a source of supply; and

responsive to a determination that the user does not have said authority, determine an authorized approver for the business partner entry, initiate an approval workflow item for the authorized approver, and put the electronic purchasing process on hold.

assign the selected supplier as a source of supply in the in the electronic purchasing process.

31. (Previously Presented) The computing system of claim 29, wherein the electronic procurement computing system is further operative to map parsed information from the electronic response into fields according to a partner interface protocol.

32. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim 29, wherein the information received from the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory comprises an HTML page.

33. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim 29, wherein the information received from the selected external ~~contact~~ business partner directory comprises an XML page.

34. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim 29, wherein the electronic purchasing process requires a supplier ~~contact~~ business partner.

35. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim 34, wherein the electronic procurement computing system is further operative to:

complete the electronic purchasing process with the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry.

36. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim 35, wherein the electronic procurement system is further operative to:

generate a purchase order using the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry.

37. (Canceled)

38. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim [37] 29, wherein the electronic procurement computing system is further operative to:

flag the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry as incomplete in response to determining the user does not have said authority.

39. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim 38, wherein the electronic procurement computing system is further operative to:
generate a purchasing document with said new ~~contact~~ business partner entry;
and
flag the purchasing document as on hold.

40. (Canceled)

41. (Canceled)

42. (Currently Amended) The computing system of claim [40] 29, wherein the electronic procurement computing system is further operative to:
delete the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry from the internal ~~contact~~ business partner directory in response to the authorized approver not approving the new ~~contact~~ business partner entry.

Reasons for Allowance

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Upon review of the evidence at hand, it is hereby concluded that the evidence obtained and made of record, alone or in combination, neither anticipates, reasonably teaches, nor renders obvious the below noted features of applicant's invention as the noted features amount to more than a predictable use of elements in the prior art. The allowable features include "determining whether a user who initiated and is controlling the electronic purchasing process has authority to approve the new business partner entry; responsive to a determination that approval is not required, identifying the new business partner as authorized in the internal business partner directory, and allowing the user to continue with the electronic purchasing process with the selected supplier as a source of supply; and responsive to a determination that the user does not have said authority, determining an authorized approver for the business partner entry, initiating an approval workflow item for the authorized approver, and putting the electronic purchasing process on hold."

In addition to the above, the Examiner emphasizes the interrelation of the above distinguishing elements with the remainder of each respective claim element, and further notes that it is the interrelation that truly distinguishes Applicant's invention from the evidence at hand. Moreover, none of the evidence at hand teaches or suggests the combination of features claimed, nor does there exist an appropriate rationale for further modification of the evidence at hand.

The closest NPL of record, Easyask (see attached PTO-892, Reference U) discloses an electronic commerce supplier network to allow trading partners to get up to date information from product catalogs; however Easyask does not explicitly disclose the above noted limitation and it would not have been obvious to combine the reference with any other teachings to render independent claims 1 and 29 obvious.

It is hereby asserted by the Examiner that, in light of the above and in further deliberation over all of the evidence at hand, that the claims are allowable as the evidence at hand does not anticipate the claims and does not render obvious any further modification of the references to a person of ordinary skill in the art.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to JASON B. DUNHAM whose telephone number is (571)272-8109. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 8-5.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Jeff Smith can be reached on 571-272-6763. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Jason B Dunham/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3625